



# EMERGENCY PROGRAM NEWS

## Animal Health and Food Safety Services

### Animal Health Branch

No. 32, H. J. Hamlen, DVM, MS, Dipl. ACVPM, editor

September 2001

#### **A Message from Dr. Breitmeyer, State Veterinarian**

As always, it is vitally important that all those involved with California animal agriculture work together to protect the health and productivity of our state's flocks and herds and assure a safe and wholesome food supply for consumers. If you observe unusual conditions, high rates of illness or death, or suspect a foreign animal disease or pest incursion, please notify your veterinarian and state or federal animal health officials immediately.

#### **West Nile Virus Update**

The West Nile Virus (WNV) outbreak, first detected in the US in 1999, has been sweeping westward across the country. As of September 17, 2001 this summer's outbreak has affected 21 states and Washington, D.C. and is predicted to reach California within the next two years. Human illness has been seen in Florida, New Jersey, Georgia, and New York with one death. Nineteen states have reported finding infected birds, and four states have reported infection in horses. The majority of the 39 equine cases have occurred in Florida, and 33% of the infected horses have died or been euthanatized.

WNV may cause mild, flu-like signs or encephalitis that may be fatal to both humans and horses. Migratory birds are an important reservoir for WNV and have served as the major vector for movement of the virus into new areas. The virus also causes death in many bird species.

The USDA recently issued a conditional license to Fort Dodge Laboratories to market a killed WNV vaccine for horses in the United States. This vaccine has been approved in California, but is not yet available due to demand on the East Coast.

It is important for horse owners to have the option of protecting their animals from WNV infection.

However, horse owners should be aware that there may be future restrictions on interstate and international shipments of horses with WNV vaccination titers. Practitioners and owners should discuss this potential restriction when making vaccination decisions. Accurate vaccination records will be important in evaluating whether the serological titer is due to infection or vaccination.

The Department of Health Services (DHS) leads the State effort to monitor for the presence of WNV and will organize the response to an outbreak of this serious zoonotic disease. However, DHS depends on animal health officials, the California Animal Health and Food Safety Services Laboratory System, the veterinary community, and equine owners to monitor the health of California's horses. ***Owners are urged to notify their veterinarian if their horse shows neurologic signs, and veterinarians are asked to follow specific diagnostic procedures on clinically suspect horses.*** These procedures are detailed in the May 2001 CDFA/DHS encephalitis newsletter. These guidelines may also be obtained from the practitioner's Animal Health Branch District Office.

#### **Global Disease Update**

The introduction of a foreign animal disease into the US is a constant threat, and continued vigilance by producers and veterinarians is crucial. Farm biosecurity plays an important role in safeguarding animals from both domestic and foreign animal diseases. Veterinarians can assist producers in developing a practical biosecurity plan. ***Veterinarians and livestock producers should also remember that serious animal diseases may be transmitted from a foreign country by movement of people, inanimate objects, and food.*** If you intend to visit a foreign country or are hosting foreign visitors on your farm, follow biosecurity precautions. For more information,

contact CDFA-Animal Health Branch or visit our Web site.

***Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE)  
Additional Countries Report Cases***

The **Czech Republic** declared its first case of BSE in a native-born cow on June 8, 2001. This was the first confirmed case of BSE from a native cow outside of Western Europe. The Czech Republic banned feeding meat and bone meal to cattle in 1991, and believes the infection may be due to contaminated, imported milk replacers. As a result, all animals in the herd were destroyed and tested for BSE. All cattle older than 30 months must now be tested at slaughter. In **Greece**, on June 26, 2001, a 5 year old cow showing no clinical signs tested positive for BSE during routine testing. All animals from that farm were slaughtered and incinerated. Approximately 94 animals older than 24 months were tested for BSE and all tested negative. On September 10, BSE was also detected in **Japan**.

The United States already had restrictions on imports from European countries, including Greece and the Czech Republic. In December, 1997 the United States Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services (APHIS) prohibited the importation of live ruminants, ruminant meat, bone, blood, and meat meal, offal, fat, glands, and serum from ruminants from Europe. In December 2000, APHIS prohibited all imports of all rendered animal protein products from Europe, regardless of species. Japan is now under similar import restrictions.

***Update on Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD)  
Outbreak in the United Kingdom (UK)***

On February 20, 2001, the UK reported an FMD outbreak in cloven-hoofed animals. The disease was first detected in a group of 28 pigs. By the time the disease was traced to the illegal feeding of uncooked, illegally imported meat scraps to swine, millions of animals had been exposed. This agricultural catastrophe was compounded by mass movements of animals (1.5 million sheep moved through an exposed market before the disease was detected), the insidious spread through sheep that may show subtle clinical signs of infection, and varying degrees of biosecurity at the farm level and in market channels.

As of September 14, 2001, 3.9 million animals have been killed in the effort to stamp out the disease, and 2 million more have been killed for welfare reasons. Slaughter for welfare reasons was mainly due to the evaporation of the export market for large numbers of animals. The daily average of animals killed during the outbreak peak ranged from 20,000 to 76,000. The economic, political, and emotional toll has been staggering. The estimated costs associated with the FMD outbreak in the UK will reach \$7 billion by year end.

Over the past six months, the USDA has sent 22 veterinarians from California, including federal, state, and private practitioners, to the UK to aid in FMD eradication. Among the valuable lessons these individuals brought home was the reaffirmation that strong preventive measures and early detection are paramount to minimizing the impact of FMD. Producers and veterinarians are on the frontlines of early detection.

***Rabbit Calicivirus in Utah***

Rabbit Calicivirus, otherwise known as viral hemorrhagic disease, has been reported in August at a Utah rabbitry. It is believed that the outbreak was contained. An Emergency Program Alert was sent out to veterinarians and rabbit owners in late August. Contact Animal Health Branch Headquarters or visit the CDFA Web site for a copy.

***Related Outreach Materials Available:***

Viral Encephalitis in Horses and Ratities  
Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy  
Foot and Mouth Disease  
Rabbit Calicivirus in Utah  
Biosecurity Tips for Foreign Travelers

For more information, call:

***CDFA, Animal Health Branch***

Headquarters (916) 654-1447  
Redding District (530) 225-2140  
Modesto District (209) 491-9350  
Fresno District (559) 237-1843  
Ontario District (909) 647-4462

Or visit the Emergency Programs Web site at:

<http://www.cdfa.ca.gov>

***DHS, Public Health Section*** (916) 327-0332

Web site: [www.dhs.ca.gov](http://www.dhs.ca.gov)

***USDA, Veterinary Services*** (916) 857-6170

Or tollfree (877) 741-3690.

Web site: <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/>